
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	629 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	November 17, 2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	12-028	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Amanda Molson	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Restaurant proprietor Henry Mendoza, with drawings prepared by David Shove-Brown, AIA, requests conceptual approval for alterations to 629 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE (La Plaza Restaurant) in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

The construction permit for 629 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE was issued in October of 1945. Although this date technically falls within the period of significance for the Capitol Hill Historic District (which extends through 1945), it is on the cusp. Designed as a store by Lloyd C. Mayers for owner I. Bindeman, this masonry building is quite simple in its design.

It is unknown whether the existing second story, which was constructed of cinderblock and faced with wood paneling and trim, was part of the original design or added later. The building also features a projecting cornice (with rot issues), an abandoned box sign that has since been painted over, and a roll-up security gate that covers the storefront.

Proposal

The existing second story is a windowless attic space used for storage, and the applicant wishes to convert it to additional seating space for the restaurant downstairs. Due to the relatively low ceiling height on this level, the applicant proposes to raise the height of the roof by approximately 2'. The work would also include the insertion of three street-facing windows at this level in order to provide light for the seating area. The second story of the façade would be refaced in a brick veneer over the existing cinderblock, with the projecting cornice over the storefront removed. Aesthetic improvements would include removing the roll-up security gate and the box sign, replacing windows and doors in the storefront, and repainting the building.

Evaluation

The Board's design guidelines recognize that historic properties may merit different levels of treatment depending on their relative significance. Considering the late date of construction, simplicity of design, and somewhat discordant elements of the façade presently, a measure of flexibility is warranted in evaluating proposed alterations to this building. The increase in height is fairly modest, and the building would still terminate below the height of the contributing

building next door at 631 and the non-contributing building at 627. The new windows are a welcome change to a presently foreboding façade, as is the removal of extraneous signage and security measures. Prior to final approval, the applicants should work with staff to refine detailing for the window headers and sills and for the new cornice at the roofline. A building of this vintage would likely have had precast headers and sills, and perhaps a brick cornice with a slight projection.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.